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THE SENATE
STATE OF MICHIGAN

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES:
LOCAL, URBAN AND STATE AFFAIRS,
VICE CHAIR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SMALL BUSINESS
AND REGULATORY REFORM
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL
AFFAIRS
TRANSPORTATION

August 19, 2003

Sen. Jason Allen, District 37
Michigan Senate
125 W. Allegan
820 Farnum
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Sen. Allen:

I am writing you to follow up on my two written requests (3/5/03, 4/16/03) that the Senate Commerce Committee hold a hearing and a vote on Senate Bill 186. I am sure you know that SB 186 would end smoking in restaurants in Michigan. I have worked hard since I won a special election in 1997 to make this issue one of primary importance to Michigan citizens and the Michigan Legislature. I hope you will agree that the time is right to put this issue on the front burner and have a fair debate.

I know that like me, you are a non-smoker, thankfully our numbers are growing every day. Now almost 75 percent of Michigan residents are non-smokers. Unfortunately there are still far too many Michiganians who are exposed to damaging levels of second-hand smoke every year. Second-hand smoke is the third leading cause of preventable death in this country, killing 53,000 nonsmokers in the U.S. each year. For every eight smokers the tobacco industry kills, it takes one nonsmoker with them. I'm sure you will find it surprising that according to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) this is over three times the number of deaths (17,000) caused by drunk drivers every year. I was proud to join you in voting for HB 4247 that lowered the threshold for drunk-driving infractions to a BAC of .08, but we need to address all causes of preventable death. While the Michigan Senate cannot eliminate 100 percent of second-hand smoke, I believe it is morally irresponsible of us to allow a regulated industry to expose its customers to poison.

Let me share with you just two comments from the countless letters I've received from citizens around the state regarding this proposal. Dr. Nancy Wells of Schoolcraft said:

"I have asthma which developed in my adult years, and smoke is a trigger for an asthma attack. All it takes is one smoker, and not even necessarily one that is particularly close. If I don't make a fairly hasty exit, I get to coughing, and that sometimes goes into the

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barking kind of coughing that is croup. At worst, I literally can hardly catch my breath, I sound awful and frightening, and my lungs feel like they're on fire. On the positive side, I haven't died from one of these attacks yet, but some people do die of asthma attacks."

Jeff Birgbauer of Grosse Pointe Farms said he supported the bill because:

"About 2-1/2 years ago I received a double lung transplant due to the genetic illness, Cystic Fibrosis. It is suspected that exposure to smoke can cause chronic rejection in lung transplant patients so I choose not to go to restaurants."

I hope that like me you will agree that these folks should not have to choose between their health and a nice evening out with their family. But the problem doesn't end with people that have pre-existing diseases, I'm concerned also about the employees of these restaurants. While my constituents make cars, I know a fair number of your constituents work in the tourism and hospitality industry. The State of Michigan should do all they can to ensure that waitresses, bus-boys, cooks and maitre 'ds do not have to choose between their long term health and a paycheck.

Finally, I'm sure you have heard the same argument as I have from the tobacco companies and other opponents of this bill that passage of SB 186 will lead to a loss of business for restaurants along the Michigan-Ohio border. I would like to point out an article I saw on July 10 in *The Toledo Blade* commenting that the City of Toledo will enact its smoke-free restaurant ordinance on August 31 and that many Toledo suburbs are considering similar ordinances.

I am sure that you understand that as a father and grandfather I feel a special obligation to protect the health and safety of all Michigan citizens. I hope that you will join me in this fight.

Sincerely,

Raymond E. Basham
8th District

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